VANCOUVER metro®

NEWS WORTH SHARING.

Happy holidays, Vancouver!

We're taking Christmas off, but pick up our Boxing Day edition, a special look ahead at 2015

Magnotta guilty on all charges

Jury hands down first-degree murder sentence, rejects not criminally responsible defence

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This pancake has it all

Apple flapjack with bacon makes for an indulgent holiday breakfast

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VOTERS MELT FOR FROZEN

POPULAR KIDS' FLICK NAMED ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PAGE 11

Abuse suit against Furlong dropped

Civil case. But woman continues to stand by allegations that former Olympic chief molested her when she was 11

A 56-year-old woman, who claims former Vancouver Olympic CEO John Furlong sexually abused her while he was a teacher in a northern B.C. school, has withdrawn her lawsuit.

Beverly Mary Abraham said she decided to drop the civil case after months of careful consideration, saying the stress of the lawsuit was too difficult to bear following the deaths of several relatives this year.

"I was so stressed about everything," she told Metro from her home in Burns Lake on Tuesday. "There was a lot of weight on my shoulders."

Abraham said her brother died four months ago, followed shortly afterward by her cousin, 16-year-old nephew and daughter-in-law. Her mother, 91, has also suffered health problems in recent months, she said.

After speaking with her children, husband and hereditary chief, Abraham decided it was time to let go of the lawsuit.

Former Vancouver Olympic CEO John Furlong stands in front of the Olympic Cauldron in Jack Poole Plaza in 2011. A Burns Lake woman who accused Furlong of sexually abusing her in the late 1960s dropped her lawsuit Friday. JENNIFER GAUTHIER/FOR METRO

"They all gave me the same answer," she said. "Maybe in the long run I might regret it. But right now, I feel that I need to go on with my life instead of it weighing me down."

A B.C. Supreme Court judge granted Abraham her request for dismissal Friday.

"Right now, I feel 100 per cent better and I can breathe now," she said. "I never grieved for my brother, for my cousin, for my nephew and my daughter-in-law, so now I can grieve and I can let go."

In court documents, Abraham alleged Furlong had sexually molested her a dozen times from November 1969 to May 1970, when she was 11 years old. She also alleged Furlong emotionally and psychologically manipulated her, telling her, "You're my beautiful Indian girl and my protege," and that she was his "favourite of all the girls."

Abraham said she stands by her claims.

The allegations arose after a 2012 Georgia Straight newspaper article written by freelance journalist Laura Robinson claimed Furlong had abused children during his time teaching at Immaculata Roman Catholic elementary school in the late 1960s and 1970s.

Furlong is suing Robinson for libel, while she is suing him for defamation.

A statement from Furlong's lawyer said he has always maintained the allegations from Abraham and two other accusers are false, and an RCMP investigation has also concluded Abraham's allegations are not supported.

Furlong still faces lawsuits from Grace Jessie West and an unidentified man, who both allege they were sexually assaulted by Furlong while they were students at Immaculata elementary school in the late 1960s. Furlong would not comment with respect to the two outstanding claims as they remain before the courts.

THANDI FLETCHER/METRO
WITH FILES FROM THE CANADIAN PRESS

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NEWS 1

Surrey

Backseat baby found safe after car theft

Surrey RCMP say a baby has been safely reunited with its mother after a series of armed car thefts on Tuesday.

Police were called to the area of 186th Street and Fraser Highway to respond to a man with a gun, but they learned while en route that the suspect had stolen a Toyota pick-up truck with a woman still inside and fled the area.

Soon after, the truck was involved in a multiple-vehicle crash on Fraser Highway near 68th Avenue, where the suspect stole a second vehicle in attempt to get away.

This time, the vehicle was a Ford Escape, with a baby still in the back seat.

Mounties say they sent all available units to the area in an effort to locate the car and baby.

The stolen vehicle was found abandoned minutes later, near 96th Avenue and 158th Street, with the baby safe inside.

Police say the baby has been reunited with its mother and is unharmed.

Investigators have also recovered a gun from inside the first stolen vehicle at the accident scene.

However, the suspect remains at large.

Police are looking for a suspect described as a white man, approximately six feet tall with "bad skin" and short hair.

He was wearing dark clothing at the time.

Extensive patrols are underway to locate the suspect, RCMP say.

Anyone with information about the suspect's whereabouts is asked to call police immediately.

MATT KIELTYKA/METRO

Coun. Raymond Louie at Vision Vancouver headquarters during the 2014 municipal election campaign. EMILY JACKSON/METRO FILE

Liberals, NDP court councillor Louie

Federal run. Contest for Vancouver East hasn't tempted Raymond Louie — yet

EMILY JACKSON
emily.jackson@metronews.ca

Vancouver councillor Raymond Louie has an open mind to running in the 2015 federal election after being approached by both the Liberals and the NDP to be the candidate in Vancouver East.

But no one has made the case — at least not yet — to convince the Vision Vancouver councillor to leave municipal politics so quickly after the tough November election, Louie told Metro Tuesday.

"I'm pretty happy where I am," Louie said, noting he has been appointed acting mayor and first vice president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

Since the latter is a high-profile gig that puts him in meetings with the leaders of the federal parties, including the prime minister, Louie claims he's "neutral" in federal politics and has "no preference" between the Liberals and the NDP.

Whoever winds up representing Vancouver East must be able to advocate for housing affordability, transportation and childcare, he said.

Yet Louie seems like he could still be convinced.

"They would need to make it make sense to me," he said. "My job is to try to make it better for our citizens. Whatever route or position that might be, I'm keeping an open mind to that."

No matter if Louie enters the race, the riding will be hotly contested since longtime MP Libby Davies announced last week she will not run again.

B.C. NDP MLA Mable Elmore is seeking the federal NDP nomination to run in the riding and marijuana legalization advocate Jodie Emery is vying for the nod to run for the Liberals.

Quoted

"My job is to try to make it better for our citizens. Whatever route or position that might be, I'm keeping an open mind to that." Councillor Raymond Louie

Cpl. Michaud. Mountie shot three weeks ago develops health problems

The Kamloops Mountie who was shot during a traffic stop over three weeks ago is experiencing medical complications.

RCMP say Cpl. Jean Rene Michaud has been airlifted from Kamloops to a Metro Vancouver hospital with his wife by his side.

Michaud underwent two surgeries in the first few days after being shot, but RCMP haven't indicated what kind of complications the officer is experiencing.

In the early morning hours of Dec. 3, Michaud was shot and injured by someone inside a vehicle he had stopped in a Kamloops residential area.

Within hours, 36-year-old Kenneth Knudson was arrested and faces charges off attempted murder, aggravated assault and two firearms-related charges.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

White Christmas? Nope

Vancouver's Christmas Day forecast is a mixed holiday bag, according to an Environment Canada meteorologist.

Doug Lundquist told Metro on Tuesday that the government's weather office has been fielding many calls from media across the country wondering what's in store for Canadians on Dec. 25, but there hasn't been "as many from a city that doesn't have a hope" for a white Christmas.

That's the bad news.

The good news, according to Lundquist, is "St. Nick will come regardless."

Temperatures on Thursday are expected to range from seven to three degrees, and there's a good chance the sun may poke out between two systems either side of Christmas.

For those desperate for snow on Christmas Day, Lundquist said there's a chance of some fresh snow at higher elevations on the North Shore and at local ski hills.

Temperatures are expected to trend downward as the week, and an arctic front, move along, meaning there's a chance snow may actually touch down in Vancouver at some point next week if that trend continues.

MATT KIELTYKA/METRO

Sandbags at Locarno Beach earlier this month. JONATHAN HAYWARD/CANADIAN PRESS

Avian flu spreads to first non-commercial site

Backyard coop.
Officials say 85 birds have died or will be destroyed in the farm

The avian flu outbreak that has resulted in the deaths of thousands of birds in British Columbia's Fraser Valley has struck its first backyard coop.

A non-commercial site in Langley that raises ducks, chickens, geese and turkeys has been infected with the virus.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency says 85 birds on the farm have either died or will be destroyed.

Eleven commercial sites in the Fraser Valley have already been infected with the virus and nearly 250,000 birds are dead or will be euthanized.

By the numbers

250,000

Nearly 250,000 birds have died or will be euthanized since the outbreak began

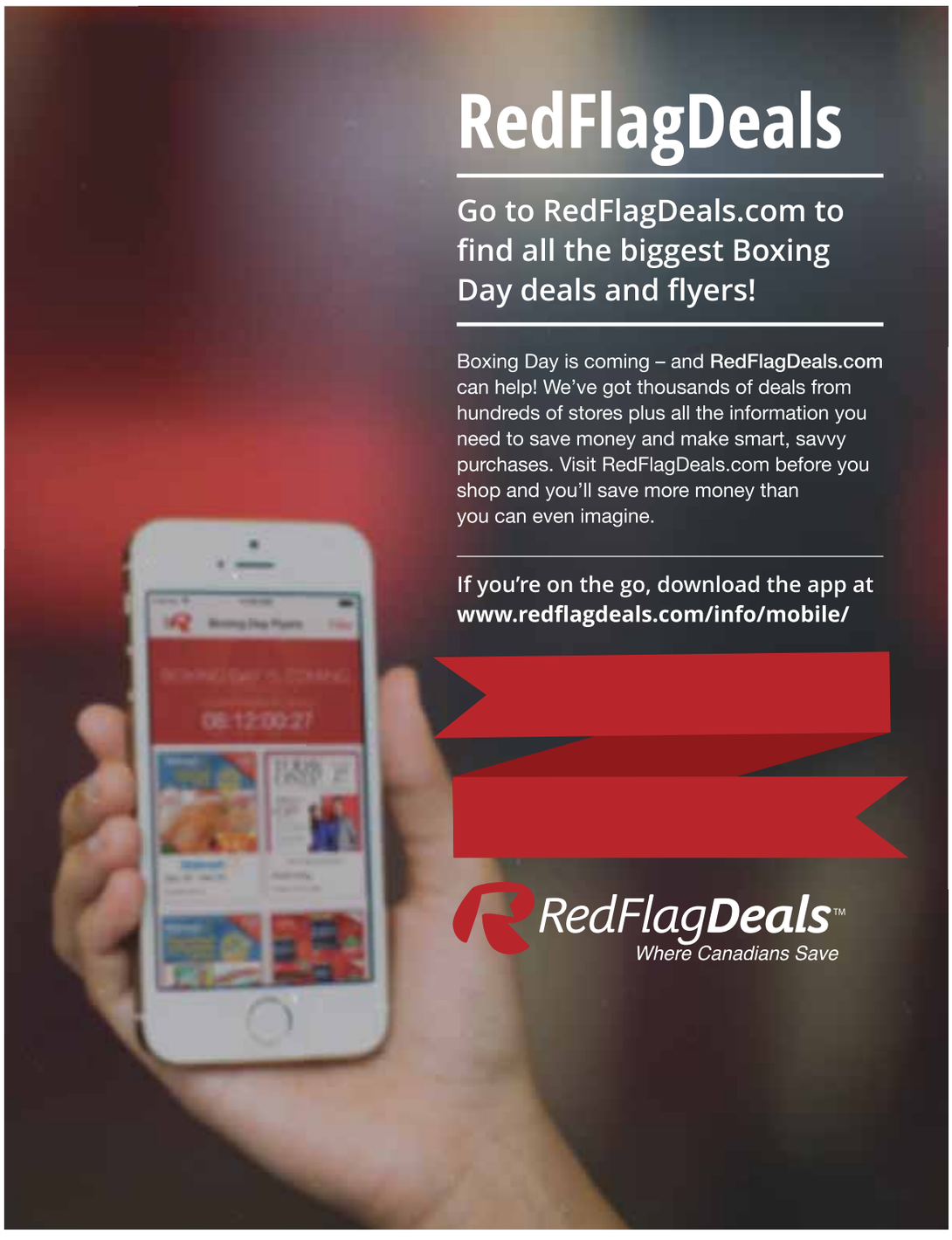
The virus is related to a deadly strain that has spread throughout Asia.

It is now affecting North American poultry for the first time.

Health Canada has said there is no evidence to suggest the flu can be transmitted to humans through the consumption of poultry as long as it is handled and cooked properly.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

This commercial poultry farm in Chilliwack was put under quarantine earlier this month. JONATHAN HAYWARD/THE CANADIAN PRESS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Attempted murder charge.
Eric Nelson found not criminally responsible

A man who opened fire in a small town in B.C.'s Interior, shooting a man in the face won't be held criminally responsible.

Eric Nelson of Spences Bridge was charged with a dozen counts including attempted murder after a series of violent incidents in May 2013.

The court heard that Nelson opened fire on a home in Spences Bridge, hitting a man in the face.

A couple of days later, he got into an argument with another motorist on a rural highway and threw a boulder at the vehicle, which had two people inside.

B.C. Supreme Court Justice Joel Groves said he was satisfied Nelson was not criminally responsible because of a mental disorder.

His defence lawyer said Nelson was in the throes of a manic episode and was diagnosed with bipolar disorder after the incidents.

"He was under a variety of grandiose and, at times, paranoid delusions," said Micah Rankin, who described his client as a "back-to-the-earth hippie type."

After shooting up the Spences Bridge home on May 15, 2013, Nelson met with his son in nearby Lytton the next day and boasted about having shot a pedophile in the face, court heard.

Nelson's file will now be handed over to the B.C. Review Board, which will monitor his mental state on a regular basis.

Nelson is not in custody.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Vernon

Ex-butcher gets four years for sexually touching youth

A former butcher-shop owner in Vernon has been sentenced to four years in prison for sexually touching a person under 16.

Charles Taylor, also known as Jim Taylor, has pleaded guilty to the offence and must submit a DNA sample to the national sex offender registry.

He is also prohibited from possessing firearms for 10 years once he is released from custody.

The first allegation surfaced in August of 2013, and police ended up with four separate files before the case proceeded to B.C. Supreme Court.

Taylor still faces three other charges in 2015.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Surrey

Mounties arrest 13 offenders in 13 days

It's lucky number 13 for Mounties in Surrey this month.

The detachment's Auto Crime Target Team arrested 13 auto crime suspects in 13 days from Dec. 4 to Dec. 17.

Police are recommending dozens of charges relating to stolen property, fraud, drugs and several breaches of conditions.

In one case, a suspect is facing at least 25 charges, police said.

"With these recent arrests, a number of prolific property crime offenders have been taken off the streets and many will be spending the holiday season behind bars," said Sgt. Gary Rodricks of the Auto Crime Target Team.

THANDI FLETCHER/METRO

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Abbotsford

No charge against officer after man's finger broken

Prosecutors in British Columbia say they won't lay charges against a Fraser Valley police officer accused of breaking a man's finger during an arrest.

The Criminal Justice Branch says it is unlikely the officer will be convicted for any offence related to an incident on Jan. 28, 2014, in Abbotsford, B.C. On that day, a report of domestic violence drew members of the Abbotsford Police Department to a home, where the man was arrested. The man alleged the arresting officer used excessive force while handcuffing him and as a result broke a finger.

The Criminal Justice Branch says says it had reason to discount the complainant's evidence because he told others he'd broken the finger while skateboarding. Prosecutors say the man and his sister had been drinking alcohol, other police described the arrest as uneventful, and the man's girlfriend heard no complaint of injury at the time. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Nanaimo

Man arrested in connection with string of thefts

Mounties have arrested a man they believe is behind a rash of recent thefts from Nanaimo apartment buildings.

A 25-year-old Nanaimo man was arrested early Monday morning when an RCMP officer noticed a suspicious car parked near an apartment complex on Cypress Avenue.

A check of the vehicle revealed it had been stolen Dec. 6, police said.

Police searched the vehicle and found several stolen items, including jewelry, allegedly taken during a recent break-in from an apartment building in the area Sunday.

Police arrested two people inside the car, a man and a 17-year-old woman, for possession of stolen property.

The woman has since been released, according to police.

The man is still in policy custody and is expected to appear in court Wednesday. THANDI FLETCHER/METRO

Surrey

Man faces jail time after carjacking

A 43-year-old man has been sentenced to 16 months in jail after he carjacked a truck while fleeing a transit police fare check at a Surrey SkyTrain station.

Paul Cisneros was arrested in November for the Oct. 22 incident that started when transit police officers were conducting a fare check at King George SkyTrain Station.

According to transit police, Cisneros failed to provide a valid proof of fare and fled the scene.

He ran into a busy intersection where he carjacked a truck and pushed the driver out of a moving car, police said.

One of the officers pursued Cisneros and managed to get into the passenger side of the truck but was also pushed out, police said.

On Dec. 19, Cisneros pleaded guilty and was convicted of dangerous operation of a motor vehicle and theft of a motor vehicle.

He has been sentenced to 16 months in jail and is prohibited from driving for one year. THANDI FLETCHER/METRO

Davie Village to get makeover

Call for pitches. City seeks designers to spruce up the heart of the gaybourhood, making it more distinctive and memorable

EMILY JACKSON
emily.jackson@metronews.ca

The Davie Village is about to get even more fabulous in the New Year.

The city is looking for designers to spruce up the heart of the gaybourhood and make it a more distinctive, memorable attraction that celebrates the LGBTQ community.

Prospective designers must come up with three concepts for the area on Davie Street between Thurlow and Jervis and Bute Street between Burnaby and north of Davie.

The public will get the chance to give their input in spring 2015, according to the request for proposals.

Pitches must include ideas for an outdoor LGBTQ museum, street furniture, easy cycling and walking, and an overhead feature spanning the intersection with the beloved rainbow crosswalks (renderings picture a disco ball).

The city's goal is to make the area inclusive, safe and open for business. It will encourage patios that spill out into public space but limit residential development, as it wants the area known for its nightclubs to be "vibrant" at all times of the day.

It's not clear how much the city intends to spend on the improvements, as it is asking prospective designers to pitch them the costs.

But the funding will come from the public benefits strategy for the West End community plan, which earmarked $16.5 million for parks and open spaces over the next 30 years. The village is a mere fraction of planned improvements package that includes rebuilding the seawall, upgrading the English Bay and Sunset Beach parks and "providing for dogs" — whatever that means.

A rendering of the rainbow crosswalk intersection from the West End community plan. CONTRIBUTED

Judge rules condo rental restriction rules invalid

The owners of a Chilliwack condo took their strata council to court and won, resulting in $10,400 in fines being cancelled.

Allan Carnahan and Colleen Carnahan had rented out their condominium at Village Creek Estates, but after the strata council amended its bylaws in February 2010, putting a restriction on only five condos being available for renters at any one time, the couple were not allowed to rent out their suite.

Section 10 of the strata's bylaws exempted owners from the rental restriction bylaw if the bylaw causes a strata owner hardship.

The Carnahans began to rent their unit in December 2010 after the strata council granted them a one-year hardship exemption.

Several further extensions of the exemption permitted them to continue renting and on July 21, 2013, the strata council extended the Carnahans' hardship exemption to Jan. 31, 2014, but advised they would not be granted a further extension.

In December 2013, the tenant vacated the suite. The Carnahans began to rent their suite to a new tenant on March 1, 2014. The strata council imposed fines of $300 a month for breaching the bylaw.

The Carnahans took the matter to court, arguing the rental restriction bylaw should be declared invalid because it does not include a procedure that the strata council has to follow when it administers its rental restriction limit.

The couple also sought the cancellation of $10,450 in fines.

At a recent hearing before B.C. Supreme Court Justice Neill Brown, the strata council argued that the rental restriction was in place since 1994 before its bylaws were formally amended and filed with the Land Title office in 2010.

It further argued that Allan Carnahan enforced the rental bylaw himself in 2008, when he sat on strata council as president.

But the judge sided with the Canahans, ruling that the strata council's rental restriction limit was unenforceable because the council was required to set out the procedure it must follow when it administers the limit.

The judge ruled that the Carnahans are entitled to lease their suite and cancelled their fines. NEAL HALL/FOR METRO

In detail

The couple also sought the cancellation of $10,4500 in fines.

- The judge said the strata council's rental restriction limit was unenforceable because the council was required to set out the procedure it must follow when it administers the limit.
- The judge ruled that the Carnahans are entitled to lease their suite and cancelled their fines.

Magnotta guilty of murder, jury finds

Life imprisonment. Luka Rocco Magnotta also convicted of four other non-murder charges

Luka Rocco Magnotta remained impassive as one of the 12 jurors who deliberated his fate uttered the word "guilty" to all five charges against him in the slaying and dismemberment of Jun Lin, including first-degree murder.

Magnotta was later sentenced to life imprisonment on the murder charge, with no chance of applying for parole for 25 years.

On the four non-murder charges, the native of Scarborough, Ont., was given the maximum terms allowed under the Criminal Code, ranging from two to 10 years. The sentences are concurrent.

His lawyer, Luc Leclair, told reporters his client was "disappointed" but "relieved."

Impact statement

"I had come to learn what happened to my son that night and I leave without a true or a complete answer. I had come to see remorse, to hear some form of apology, and I leave without anything."

Daniel Urbas reading an impact statement from Diran Lin, father of Jun Lin

Crown prosecutor Louis Bouthillier said he was fully expecting the jury to deliver the five guilty verdicts.

After the verdicts, a lawyer read out an impact statement on behalf of Lin's father, Diran Lin, who watched proceedings throughout the trial from a private room in the courthouse.

"I had come to see your trial system to see justice done and I leave satisfied that you have not let my son down," Daniel Urbas told the emotionally charged room.

The other charges Magnotta was convicted of were criminally harassing Prime Minister Stephen Harper and other members of Parliament; mailing obscene and indecent material; committing an indignity to a body; and publishing obscene materials.

Magnotta was seeking to be found not criminally responsible in the May 2012 slaying by way of mental disorder, with experts testifying he was in a psychotic state the night of the killing and couldn't tell right from wrong.

The Crown countered the crime was both planned and deliberate and that Magnotta's behaviour and actions went against someone supposedly suffering from a disease of the mind.

As Magnotta had admitted to the physical acts, the jury's task was to determine his state of mind at the time.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Marking a century since Christmas truce

The Parliament Buildings in Ottawa are shown with Christmas lights on Monday. Dr. Andrea McCrady, who is the Dominion Carillonneur, will be among 11 countries' carillonneurs playing Silent Night on Dec. 24 to mark the 100th anniversary of the Christmas truce during the First World War. FRED CHARTRAND/THE CANADIAN PRESS

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TRANSLINK

Sony releasing The Interview for Xmas

The Interview was put back into theatres Tuesday when Sony Pictures Entertainment announced a limited Christmas Day theatrical release for the comedy that provoked an international incident with North Korea and outrage over its cancelled release.

Sony Entertainment CEO Michael Lynton said that Seth Rogen's North Korea farce "will be in a number of theatres" beginning Thursday. He said Sony is also continuing its efforts to release the film on more platforms and in more theatres.

"We have never given up on releasing The Interview," Lynton said in a statement Tuesday. "While we hope this is only the first step of the film's release, we are proud to make it available to the public and to have stood up to those who attempted to suppress free speech."

For Sony, the decision was the culmination of a gradual about-face: After initially saying it had no plans to release the movie, the company began softening its position after it was broadly criticized.

Moviegoers celebrated the abrupt change in fortune for a film that appeared doomed as The Interview began popping up in the listings of independent theatres across the country Tuesday, from Atlanta to Los Angeles. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A poster for The Interview hangs on the back wall of the Alamo Drafthouse Cinema Tuesday in Houston. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

U.S. might lift ban on gay blood donors

31-year-old policy.

FDA favours new policy barring donations from men who have had gay sex in the previous year

U.S. health officials are recommending an end to America's lifetime ban on blood donations from gay and bisexual men, a 31-year-old policy that many medical groups and gay activists say is no longer justified.

The Food and Drug Administration said Tuesday it favours replacing the blanket ban with a new policy barring donations from men who have had gay sex in the previous year. FDA officials said that policy is supported by research and would put the U.S. in line with other countries including Australia, Japan and Britain.

The lifetime ban dates from the early years of the AIDS crisis and was intended to protect the blood supply from what was a then little-understood disease. But many medical groups, including the American Medical Association, say the policy is no longer supported by science, given advances in HIV testing. Gay activists say the lifetime ban is discriminatory and perpetuates negative stereotypes of homosexual men.

The agency will recommend the switch in draft guidelines early next year and move to finalize them after taking comments from the public, said FDA officials. FDA Deputy Director Dr. Peter Parks declined to give a time frame for completing the process but said, "we commit to working as quickly as possible on this issue."

All blood donations are screened for HIV; however, the test only detects the virus after it's been in the bloodstream about 10 days. That allows a brief window when the virus that causes AIDS can go undetected. According to government figures, men who have had sex with other men represent about two per cent of the U.S. population, yet account for at least 62 per cent of all new HIV infections in the U.S.

Tuesday's announcement is the culmination of years of government discussions re-examining the ban. Last month a panel of blood safety experts convened by Department of Health and Human Services voted 16-2 in favour of doing away with the lifetime ban. The panel recommended moving to a one-year ban, which bars donors who have had male-on-male sex during the previous 12 months.

Some gay activists said Tuesday that policy remains unrealistic and will still stigmatize gay and bisexual men.

"Some may believe this is a step forward, but in reality, requiring celibacy for a year is a de facto lifetime ban," the organization Gay Men's Health Crisis said after the announcement. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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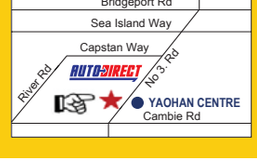

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Experts bet on Boxing Day

Black Friday's impact. Despite deals in November, Canadians still expected to seek post-Christmas sales

Boxing Day has traditionally been a bonanza for bargain hunters, but will earlier Black Friday promotions put a dent in post-Christmas sales?

Ian Lee, assistant professor with the Sprott School of Business at Ottawa's Carleton University, said while the Black Friday phenomenon has extended the holiday shopping season until the week of Boxing Day, it is not generating net new sales.

"As they introduce and extend these sales, people become more cynical.... I think consumers understand intuitively the Boxing Day week sales are going to be better deals."

Some retailers are already getting a jump on offering end-of-year bargains. Amazon.ca announced plans to feature new Boxing Day deals daily beginning Tuesday until Dec. 29, while Best Buy will launch its Boxing Day sale online on Christmas Eve.

Adrienne Down Coulson, general manager of cash-back shopping site Ebates.ca, said while participating in Black Friday and Cyber Monday promotions is "much less optional" for Canadian companies today, she doesn't foresee a huge impact on Boxing Day.

"Boxing Day is still one of the biggest shopping days, if not *the* biggest shopping day, in Canada. So as a retailer, they've got to be aggressive if they're going to compete," she said. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Shopping plans

An online survey commissioned by cash-back shopping site Ebates.ca found that about 40 per cent of Canadians plan to shop on Boxing Day.

- Most shoppers were planning to buy clothing (69 per cent) followed by electronics (63 per cent), said general manager Adrienne Down Coulson.

Market Minute

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Potentially lethal

FDA sounds off on caffeine powder

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is building a legal case against companies that sell pure powdered caffeine, attractive to teens for its perceived energy boost. Even a teaspoon of the powder can be lethal — it is equivalent to 25 cups of coffee. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Burn injury reports

Keurig recalling 7M coffee makers

Keurig is recalling seven million single-serve coffee brewing machines sold in the United States and Canada between 2009 and last July because of reports of burn injuries. Keurig says its Mini Plus Brewing Systems can overheat and spray water during brewing. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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VOICES

TIME TO END CHILD POVERTY

Activist brothers Craig and Marc Kielburger explain that while Canada is a more prosperous country now than ever before, poverty levels have also never been higher

The number of Canadian children who depend on food banks every month could fill 6,200 school buses. And we would need a line of buses stretching almost 300 kilometres long for all the children in this country who live in poverty. Those are staggering figures in a country as wealthy as ours.

Every child on those buses has a different story. There's a boy whose single mother works two jobs, struggling just to pay the bills in East Vancouver. A child of an immigrant family in Toronto's Regent Park, who came here with nothing. A girl on the Attawapiskat First Nations reserve in northern Ontario, living in a tiny house with no heat or clean water, and who only just got a proper school this year.

The rate of child poverty in Canada has increased since 1989 when our federal government voted unanimously to wipe it out by 2000. Twenty-five years later, more than 1.3 million Canadian children live below the poverty line.

The number of Canadians who rely on food banks grows every year. Almost 100 First Nations communities face drinking water advisories, and as many as 48 communities still lack a school. In the north, we've seen three families crammed into a small house, sleeping shoulder to shoulder on the floor. The same is often true of new immigrant families who arrive in our urban centres and share tiny apartments.

Our country has seen extraordinary economic growth, and at the same time deepening inequality.

If we believe every Canadian child deserves the same fair chance to thrive, we need to ask how we give them that.

From Ecuador to India, in our international work we find that fighting child poverty is mostly about meeting families' most basic needs like food, clean water and education. Those challenges exist here. But in Canada, the problem is more complex than simply building a school, or putting food on the table.

In part, it's about empowering people to change their own lives.

Given the opportunity and the tools, young Canadians in low-income communities have an incredible capacity to make positive change — for themselves, their families and their neighbours. We've learned that working with youth in urban neighbourhoods like Toronto's Regent Park, and with aboriginal youth in our Sacred Circle program. When young Canadians in these communities take on a service project — tackling issues like drug abuse or youth suicide — in the process of helping others they help themselves. Still, as Canadians we need to ask ourselves, what kind of country do we want to live in? Do we want a Canada where every child has the opportunity to succeed? If so, it's time to come up with a plan that will fulfil the promise we made 25 years ago to end child poverty.

Brothers Craig and Marc Kielburger founded a platform for social change that includes the international charity Free The Children, the social enterprise Me to We and the youth empowerment movement We Day.

We asked you:

What's the nicest thing a stranger has ever done for you?*

Just in time for Christmas, we asked people from around the country to share their stories of random acts of kindness:

Andrea Juby, Vancouver

While I was looking for a new apartment this fall, my current building manager — who was a stranger to me at the time — offered to hold a beautiful light-filled studio for a whole month until I was ready to move in. She said, "We don't want to bankrupt you before Christmas!" I walked away on air, I was so moved. That immense kindness created a real sense of home for me. I am so grateful to her and I look forward to my opportunity to pay that kindness forward.

Ena Goquiolay, Calgary

When my family and I migrated to Canada in 2001, we didn't know anybody. A newly immigrated Filipino family, who my parents only knew by referral from mutual friends back home, picked us up from the airport and offered us a room in their small apartment until my parents could find a basement to rent. They drove us to government offices and garage sales. Their kids lent us their toys and showed us around the neighbourhood. Fourteen years later, we consider these once strangers part of our family.

Brittney Skrypec, Winnipeg

I went to (a coffee shop) to get gift cards for work, and the barista asked me if I was getting anything. I said no and she told me not to worry about it. "It's on us," she said. I'm glad I got it for free, it was so nice of her! Now every time I see her, I think of that time she made my day.

Renata Tracy, Toronto *

Someone — their name was Aris — once rode their bike from Montreal to Toronto to see me for one day.

Editor's note: Aris was not a stranger to Renata. That probably would have been creepy. There was a misunderstanding in Toronto about which question to ask, but this answer was so nice we thought we'd use it anyway :)

Stephen Freedman, Ottawa

I asked a stranger for help once when my phone died. He was kind enough to let me use my phone to call my mom. She was supposed to pick me up and I was supposed to tell her where. I was downtown. There would have been a lot of confusion if I didn't call.

Qian Giang, Halifax

I crossed Spring Garden and just lost my (wallet) and another person helped me pick up my (wallet) and return to me.

metro

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Gossip

NED EHRBAR

METRO'S TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

Amy Adams GETTY IMAGES

Amy Adams on the outs with Today over Sony scandal

It was just supposed to be a simple morning talk-show appearance for Amy Adams to promote her latest film, Big Eyes, and do a victory lap after her impressive Saturday Night Live hosting duty, but instead we have yet another repercussion of the Sony hacking scandal.

Adams was reportedly in the Today show green room, ready to go on the air, when she was told she would be asked to comment on the Sony scandal. "Amy said she didn't want to contribute to the media coverage of it ... then she was abruptly told that her interview with Today was cancelled. She was shocked and upset," a source tells Page Six.

Another source, though, saw her as a bit more than "shocked and upset," claiming that Adams "was angry and acting belligerent, she was yelling at Today producers and reduced a young female staffer to tears." Guess she did learn a thing or two from working with David O. Russell after all.

Probably the most entertaining part of all of this is the NBC spokesperson's statement explaining that "as a news program, the Today show doesn't allow guests to put restrictions on interviews."

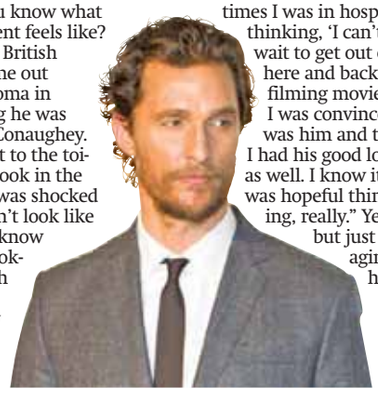
Oh man. First of all, that's total bull. And second of all, it's so cute that you think of yourself as a news program. Adorable.

Alright, alright, aw shucks! Man wakes from coma thinking he's McConaughey

You think you know what disappointment feels like? Try being the British man who came out of a six-day coma in 2012 thinking he was Matthew McConaughey. "When I went to the toilet I went to look in the mirror and I was shocked because I didn't look like him, I didn't know what I was looking at," British car accident survivor Rory Curtis tells the Telegraph. "At times I was in hospital thinking, 'I can't wait to get out of here and back to filming movies.' I was convinced I was him and that I had his good looks as well. I know it was hopeful thinking, really." Yeah, but just imagine how bummed he'd be if this had happened after McConaughey's Oscar win.

Also, Curtis says he came out of the coma speaking fluent French, a language that he'd never studied and that, to my knowledge, McConaughey doesn't speak either.

"I was sitting there spouting a foreign language from my hospital bed, acting all French in their sort of arrogant yet sophisticated way," he says. Sounds charming.



Matthew McConaughey GETTY IMAGES

Breaking! Frozen turned on Emily Blunt's water works

According to Emily Blunt, another adjective that can be applied to Disney's hugely successive animated musical Frozen is "labour-inducing." Blunt tells E! News that she watched the film just a day before she and husband John Krasinski welcomed daughter Hazel into the world. "Isn't that crazy? There was nothing on and I was like, 'Do you think this will be good?' And John indulged me and we went to see it," she says. As for when they got to the iconic Let it Go ditty? "I was like, 'I'm about to!'" Blunt remembers. "I'm literally about to let it go."

Wait, maybe they shouldn't brag about that.

Emily Blunt GETTY IMAGES

Berlin fest won't let Fifty Shades wear out welcome

In a move that kind of makes Germany's prestigious Berlinale seem kind of desperate, Fifty Shades of Grey will be celebrating its international premiere at the 65th annual edition of the film festival, programmers announced this week. The press release even goes so far as to call the roles of Christian Grey (Jamie Dornan) and Anastasia Steel (Dakota Johnson) "iconic."

Guys, come on. This is soft-core S&M porn originally written as fan fiction for Twilight, an already pretty terrible book series.

The festival also announced they'll be screening the film only once, meaning either they're really trying to build up excitement around it or they're secretly embarrassed about screening it at all. I'm going with the latter.

Jamie Dornan GETTY IMAGES

Dakota Johnson GETTY IMAGES

Frozen freezes out Swiftie for top entertainer spot

If you have children, or know someone who does, or just listened to one recently, the choice of Associated Press Entertainer of the Year won't come as much of a shock: It's Frozen, and in 2014, we just couldn't let it go.

Although the animated film opened late in 2013, the story of Elsa, Anna, Olaf, Kristoff and Sven easily outpaced other vote-getters like Sherlock star Benedict Cumberbatch, TV guru Shonda Rimes, musicians Beyoncé and Pharrell Williams, and even an entry for the culture's fixation on the female rear.

In 47 ballots submitted by members and subscribers of the AP, Frozen won 12 votes. Taylor Swift had eight. Matthew McConaughey and Jimmy Fallon were tied for third with seven votes each. Voters were asked to consider who had the most influence on entertainment and culture in 2014. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Frozen's Elsa and Anna CONTRIBUTED

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Virgo hopes fans come 'along for the ride'

Miniseries. Book of Negroes director talks search for lead actress, challenge of story spanning decades

HALEY RYAN
Metro in Halifax

Clement Virgo wasn't sure he even wanted to read the Book of Negroes.

Virgo, who directed and co-wrote the miniseries of the same name alongside author Lawrence Hill, said it was hard to get past the title before he realized it was referencing a real document that listed the names of black people who helped the British in the Revolutionary War.

"What brought me to the story is the main character, Aminata Diallo," the Canadian director said in an interview from Toronto. "She's a terrific heroine and her voice and her journey really … made me want to spend four years trying to bring her to the screen."

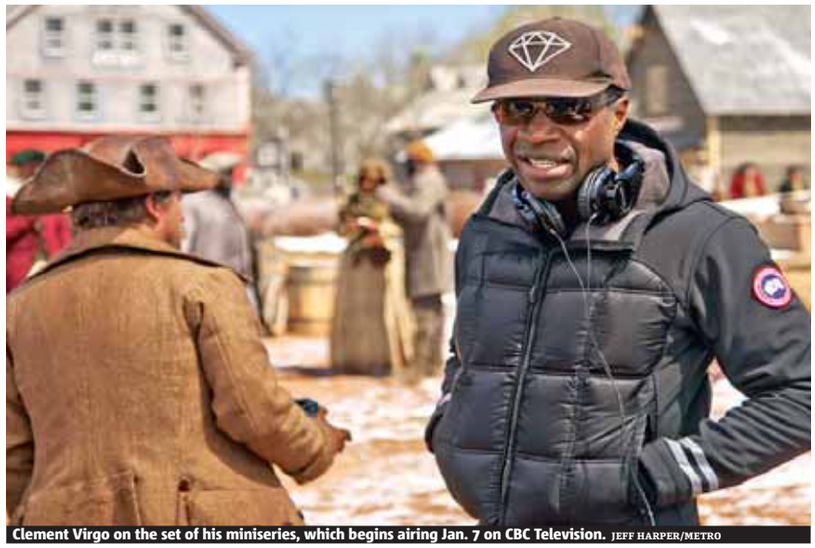
His "number one challenge" was finding someone who had the right acting chops, could embody Aminata's vulnerability and strength while playing both young and old — and he could enjoy spending nearly every scene with, Virgo said.

"Once we found Aunjanue Ellis … I was quite relieved," he said.

Although the book was released as Someone Knows My Name in the United States where there has been a more "turbulent history" around race, Virgo said the miniseries will air as the Book of Negroes on BET and the title should be a "non-issue" once people know its historical roots.

Although the book was originally supposed to be turned into a feature film, Virgo said some of the most "visually interesting" work right now is on TV, and the book's dense material fits better in a miniseries than crammed into a movie.

Working with Hill in adapting the book was easy because he was "not precious" about his novel and was open to compressing some aspects of the book while keeping it historically accurate, Virgo said.



Clement Virgo on the set of his miniseries, which begins airing Jan. 7 on CBC Television. JEFF HARPER/METRO

Virgo said he tried to focus on what he felt was important to the story and making Hill happy, while forgetting about fans of the book "looking over my shoulder.

"I was just trying to be truthful, and emotionally engaged, and hopefully they'll come along for the ride," he said.

The "genius" of Hill's story is how he thrust a Forrest Gump-like character into the history of slavery, the American Revolution, segregated settlements in Nova Scotia, and the journey back to Africa without it seeming like a lecture, Virgo said.

As Canadians watch the series, Virgo said he hopes they realize no matter where you come from, or who you are, you can overcome anything life throws at you.

"That's what Aminata represents; perseverance and resilience in the face of a lot of hardship," he said.

The reel deal

"It's a very factual story that is moving."
Director Clement Virgo
on The Book of Negroes

Joshua Jackson has never had it so Golden

Television. The Affair star is grateful for a cable schedule that gives him time to live his life

NED EHRBAR
Metro in Hollywood

Joshua Jackson's latest show, The Affair, wrapped up its first 10-episode season Sunday night, but despite the series' success and critical acclaim — including three Golden Globe nominations — he understands if you still think of other work he's done when you see him.

"Depending on where you are in the world, Pacey left a mark, and I'm 36 years old now. That's a long time ago," Jackson says of his breakout Dawson's Creek role.

"Frankly even before that, (there was) The Mighty Ducks. Maybe not in the rest of the world, but for Canada, I still walk around as the bearded old man that I am now and have nine-year-olds who are like, 'Charlie! Oh my God, what's going on?'"

Joshua Jackson CONTRIBUTED

It may seem jarring to hear a 36-year-old call himself an old man — and Jackson mentions his age often enough to suggest it's on his mind a lot — but keep in mind his first Mighty Ducks film came out nearly 23 years ago. And Dawson's Creek? Just celebrated its 16th birthday.

"I look back on those years very fondly, and obviously that was a life-changing event for me. I was already a working actor, but now it was a career arc rather than something that I was a doing when I was a kid," he says. "Yes, I do feel old sometimes."

But with age comes wisdom, and for Jackson the 10-episode structure of The Affair — and the cable landscape in general — was a revelation.

"As a man who's done a lot of seasons of television and frankly just been working for a long, long time — I mean, this is my 25th year in the union, I can't believe that's true, but it's true — what is so lovely about doing 10 episodes is that just at the point which you're tired and you want the season to be done, it's done and then you can go out and live the rest of your life," he says.

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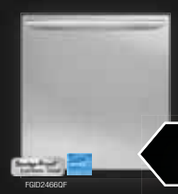

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Repaired relationship working famously well

Television. David Arquette talks friendship with Courteney Cox and Celebrity Name Game

Exes David Arquette and Courteney Cox seem to have hit a sweet spot in their personal and professional relationships.

Working together as parents, actors and business partners with Coquette Productions, which recently launched Celebrity Name Game on GameTV in Canada, Arquette says they've "hit such a stride" where they "just really help each other."

"First and foremost, we are friends and we love each other," says Arquette. "We're incredible co-parents, she's a wonderful mother, we love our daughter and we just want a healthy relationship for that, in general.

"But as far as Coquette goes, we've been developing this production company for over 10 years, so it's something we've invested a lot of time and energy in. It's something we get a lot of joy out of. So to just throw it away is a waste — on top of the fact that we really work together really well."

Through Coquette Productions, they've also developed projects including the series Cougar Town and Dirt and the upcoming film Just Before I Go, which Cox directed. The company also has a development deal at ABC Studios.

"We respect each other. We enhance each other's skill sets," says Arquette, 43. "We seldom ever have any kind of conflict. ... The greatest part is that when we get on a set that's a really fun set, that our daughter is there and she sees her parents interacting and caring for each other and having fun and being productive and creative.

"It's just a good lesson all around."

Airing nightly at 7:30 p.m. ET, Celebrity Name Game is a half-hour series that pairs well-known personalities with contestants in order to identify famous names based on improvised clues. Craig Ferguson hosts the comical show, which unfolds over four rounds and offers contestants the chance to win $20,000.

Celebrity guest stars include Cox, Arquette, Emmanuelle Chriqui, Sheryl Crow, Mario Lopez, Tom Arnold, Lisa Kudrow and Kevin McHale.

"It's hard," says Arquette. "When you get in front of the audience and there's a ticking clock, you'd be surprised at how your brain just goes blank sometimes."

Game shows and board games have been a big part of Arquette's life.

As a child, he didn't live near his grandfather, actor-comedian Cliff Arquette, so he watched him on the game show Hollywood Squares in order to feel connected.

"We lived across the country and I was really young, but it was one of the ways I got to know him," he says "I was only three or four or something and I'd be able to watch him on television, and I loved the show and I loved the humour and I loved the entertainment element.

"So it had always been something we loved, and my father was an improvisational actor, so we did a lot of improv games, like Charades or Freeze."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

History of him and her

- Arquette and Cox announced their split in 2010 and finalized their divorce in May 2013 after nearly 14 years of marriage. They have a 10-year-old daughter named Coco and have appeared onscreen together in projects including the Scream horror films.

From his wrestling days in the early 2000s to his stints as a graffiti artist and a breakdancer, Arquette says he likes "just having fun, going out there and being silly." GETTY

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Ratings: *Certified Fresh:* *Fresh:* *Rotten:* *Audience response:* *Audience anticipation for the film:* +

Musical

Annie

Director. Will Gluck

Stars. Jamie Foxx, Quvenzhane Wallis

A Broadway classic that has delighted audiences for generations comes to the big screen with a new, contemporary vision in. This modern telling captures the magic of the classic characters. Annie, a young, happy foster kid who's also tough enough to make her way on the streets of New York in 2014.

Rotten Tomatoes™ score
Critics: 29% **Audience:** 61%

Kids/Family

Into the Woods

Director. Sean Anders

Stars. Meryl Streep, Emily Blunt, James Corden

Into the Woods is a modern twist on several of the beloved Brothers Grimm fairy tales, intertwining the plots of a few choice stories and exploring the consequences of the characters' wishes and quests. This humorous and heartfelt musical follows the classic tales of Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Jack and the Beanstalk, and Rapunzel.

Rotten Tomatoes™ score
Critics: 71% **Audience:** + 97%

Drama

Big Eyes

Director. Tim Burton

Stars. Amy Adams, Christoph Waltz

Directed and produced by Tim Burton, Big Eyes is based on the true story of Walter Keane (Christoph Waltz), who was one of the most successful painters of the 1950s and early 1960s. The artist earned staggering notoriety by revolutionizing the commercialization and accessibility of popular art with his enigmatic paintings of waifs with big eyes.

Rotten Tomatoes™ score
Critics: 72% **Audience:** + 95%

Drama

Unbroken

Director. Angelina Jolie

Stars. Jack O'Connell, Domhnall Gleeson

Academy Award winner Angelina Jolie directs and produces Unbroken, following the incredible life of Olympian and war hero Louis "Louie" Zamperini (Jack O'Connell) who, along with two other crewmen, survived in a raft for 47 days after a near-fatal plane crash in the Second World War, only to be caught by the Japanese Navy and sent to a prisoner-of-war camp.

Rotten Tomatoes™ score
Critics: 48% **Audience:** + 96%

Mystery & Suspense

The Imitation Game

Director. Morten Tyldum

Stars. Benedict Cumberbatch

During the winter of 1952, British authorities entered the home of mathematician, cryptanalyst and war hero Alan Turing to investigate a reported burglary. They ended up arresting Turing himself on charges of 'gross indecency', that would lead to his conviction of homosexuality — little did officials know they were incriminating the pioneer of computing.

Rotten Tomatoes™ score
Critics: 86% **Audience:** + 98%

Mystery/Drama

The Gambler

Director. Rupert Wyatt

Stars. Mark Wahlberg

Jim Bennett (Mark Wahlberg) is a risk taker. Both an English professor and a high-stakes gambler, Bennett bets it all when he borrows from a gangster (Michael Kenneth Williams) and offers his own life as collateral. Always one step ahead, Bennett pits his creditor against the operator of a gambling ring (Alvin Ing) and leaves his dysfunctional relationship with his wealthy mother.

Rotten Tomatoes™ score
Critics: 62% **Audience:** + 94%

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LIFE 3

How-to

Use travel time wisely

1. Use travel time to relax, not to work. Power down and give your brain a break.
2. Load your iPad with that documentary you've been meaning to watch or that video tutorial you haven't had time to wrap your head around.
3. Review a language app of the foreign country you're heading to (quietly, of course). Even 10 simple words and phrases can go a long way — and two of them had better be "please" and "thank you."
4. Is the flight attendant/tour guide handing out local newspapers? Brush up on the news of the day at your destination, so you'll have something to add to the local chit-chat.
5. Never forget this all-important travel rule, whether you're on a plane, train or bus: Sleep when you can.

DOUG WALLACE/METRO

New

Westin facelift at Tremblant

Calling all ski bums: Le Westin Resort & Spa, Tremblant, Que., has recently completed a major reno. All 122 guest rooms have been redone, as has the more than 4,000 square feet of meeting space, the lobby and the front desk, spruced up with a living green wall. Expect natural wood details, earthy colours, warm fabrics and lots of big, big windows. Recharge the batteries, then hit the slopes — and repeat. Visit StarwoodHotels.com.

DOUG WALLACE/METRO

Deal

Escape to Portugal

Beat the winter blahs by heading to the Algarve. Gateways International is offering 14 days in Albufeira, Portugal, including hotel and airfare from Toronto, from $1,775 (taxes included) for travel between Jan. 1 and March 31. Because this deal is based on availability, you can get a little more flexibility with dates, and with airfare being the bulk of the cost, you could stay an extra week for peanuts if you wanted to. Call 800-268-0900.

DOUG WALLACE/METRO

The hot destinations of 2015

Make a list. Here's a rundown of accessible and fascinating trips to plan next year

See Cuba before it changes. Check out the World Expo in Milan. And if you're heading to New York City to see the view from One World Trade Center's observatory (scheduled to open late spring), take the subway to Queens and see if you can figure out why it topped Lonely Planet's "best in the U.S." destinations for 2015.

Europe

The Milan Expo opens in May for six months and is expected to draw 20 million visitors. The Expo is the modern incarnation of the old World's Fairs that thrilled 19th- and 20th-century guests with new products and technology.

The theme of the Milan Expo is food and nutrition, and dozens of countries are participating. The U.S. will do its part by sending six authentic food trucks to Italy featuring regional American and ethnic fusion menus. Milan's famous opera house, La Scala, normally closed in the summer, will host performances daily during the Expo.

Anniversaries

Singapore celebrates its golden Jubilee — 50 years of independence from Great Britain. Vietnam celebrates 70 years since achieving independence from France, and 50 years since the first U.S. combat troops arrived at Da Nang, which some historians say marked the start of the Vietnam War — even though Americans had been sent to the country in prior years.

The One World Trade observatory is expected to open in late spring 2015. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A number of U.S. museums and historic sites will be hosting exhibits and events to mark 150 years since the assassination of Abraham Lincoln and the end of the Civil War.

The new year also marks 70 years since the end of Second World War — both the defeat of Nazi Germany and the atomic bombing of Japan that ended the war in Asia. Hiroshima and Nagasaki are planning memorial services on the August anniversaries of the bombings, along with numerous arts projects and peace-themed events throughout the year.

In New Orleans, Aug. 29 will be the 10-year anniversary of the devastation of hurricane Katrina. "Come see the new New Orleans" is the tourist industry mantra for showcasing trendy emerging neighbourhoods and a vibrant restaurant scene.

South Dakota expects crowds for the 50th Custer State Park Buffalo Roundup in September and the 75th Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in August.

Head over to South Dakota for the Custer State Park Buffalo Roundup in September. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cuba

The news that the U.S. intends to normalize relations with Cuba could lead to a rush of travellers hoping to experience the island before it loses its frozen-in-time culture to an onslaught of U.S. chain stores, hotels and tourists. But don't pack your bags just yet: For the near future, the only way you can legally visit Cuba as an American citizen is to take a "people to people" cultural exchange tour licensed by the U.S. government. The tours are expensive and itineraries are limited.

Theme Parks

Universal Studios Hollywood debuts two new attractions in 2015: Springfield, an immersive area opening in spring surrounding The Simpsons Ride, and Fast & Furious — Supercharged, a thrill ride opening in summer based on the film series.

Disneyland opens Frozen Fun in January in Anaheim, Calif., with a singalong, Olaf's Snow Fest, and meet-and-greets with Anna and Elsa, among other attractions. The California theme park also celebrates its 60th anniversary this year, with celebration details to be revealed at the end of January.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

New York City

Two big openings take place in the Big Apple in 2015: the observatory at One World Trade in late spring and the new Whitney Museum of American Art in May in Manhattan's Meatpacking District near the High Line and the Hudson River. The city also got a Christmas gift from Lonely Planet, which named the borough of Queens as a "best in the U.S." destination. Manhattan has been giving ground to trendy Brooklyn in recent years, but the elevation of Queens as the next big thing was a bit of a surprise. Not that New Yorkers and tourists alike don't love Queens attractions like the 1964 World's Fair grounds, the hipster beach scene in the Rockaways, Chinatown in Flushing, the Asian and Latin American ethnic mix in Jackson Heights and the emerging industrial-chic ambience of Long Island City. But the borough is not quite on tourist radars yet — though the Lonely Planet pronouncement may change that.

How to stop being afraid of the followup

Career. They've said they'd be in touch, but should you give them a shout in the meantime?

LAUREN MARINIGH
TalentEgg.ca

Knowing how to follow up after an interview can be key to determining if you progress on to the next step in the hiring process.

If you're not the most assertive person, you may be afraid to reach out post-interview. Here are some important steps to follow that can help make the process less intimidating.

Organize details

Often job descriptions will outline how or if they would like you to follow up.

Some jobs will state that only qualified applicants will be contacted, and will strictly outline not to follow up. Make sure you make note of these things as you are sending out applications.

Once you have sent out a followup, make sure to make note of a response you receive. This will be crucial in knowing when to follow up again, or knowing the job status.

There is nothing worse than following up when you've already heard that a position is closed.

Follow up with the appropriate person

Just as when you apply for a job, it's important that your followup be directed to the right person.

If you applied to a general HR email, you can try following up to that email, but chances are you won't hear back.

Try to find the person in charge of hiring for that particular position.

If you apply via LinkedIn, often you will be able to see who posted the job, and that will help identify the right person with whom to follow up.

Know the platform

How should you be following up?

If a position specifically states "No phone calls," follow up with an email.

Email is generally a safer and less invasive bet anyway, as it allows for the hiring manager to reply back in their own time — and avoids creating an awkward situation.

You don't want to catch someone off-guard or annoy them by not following instructions that were clearly laid out in the first place.

If you have a more casual relationship with someone involved in the hiring process (but not the key decision-maker), you may want to consider using a social media platform (like Twitter) to touch base.

Let it be and give it time

There is a fine line between following up and annoying human resources by being too persistent.

You'll definitely be contacted if you are a promising candidate, so imagine your followup as simply a confirmation of interest and an opportunity to (hopefully) gain more information about your application status in the process.

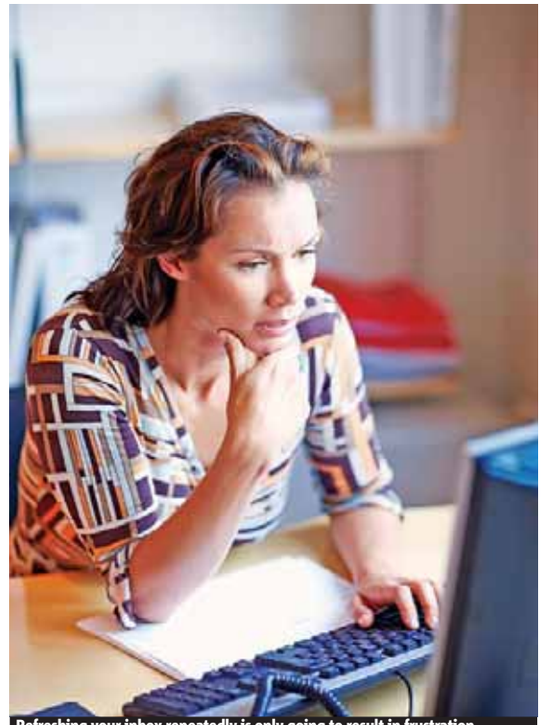
If you don't hear back from the hiring manager, don't take it personally.

While you may be disappointed that your carefully-crafted application didn't get a response, letting go of your disappointment is the only way to move forward.

Send the right message

Not knowing what to share in a followup message is a common reason for opting out.

- Don't overthink it. If you're following up on an application, keep your message brief and inquire politely about the opportunity you've applied to. Reiterate your interest and ask if there have been any new developments in the hiring process.
- If you're following up on an interview, it's OK to go into more detail. Make sure to share that you appreciated the opportunity to connect, and bring up a few key discussion topics. Close by adding that you look forward to hearing about the hiring process soon.



Refreshing your inbox repeatedly is only going to result in frustration. If the position is taken down and you still haven't heard back after a few weeks, it's safe to say they are not interested. ISTOCK

It's beginning to look a lot like the work blahs

OFFICE SPACE
Eleni Deacon
life@metronews.ca

Dear Metro,

I get extremely sluggish in the winter. It's so hard to get up in the morning— and even once I'm awake, I still feel like I'm asleep.

Everything is just so blah. How can I stay focused at work when all I want to do is crawl under a blanket?

— Want 2 Hibernate

Dear W2H,

If only we could eat a bunch of acorns, then curl up in a cute little ball and nap until April. But humans aren't chipmunks. Even in 20-below weather, we've got to haul our tails to work.

Although you want to park yourself under an afghan, don't. Physical activity — even a little bit each day — can radically energize your system. To stay positive at work, set a few manageable professional resolutions that will boost your performance without stirring up oh-no-I'm-flunking-my-resolutions anxiety. And give yourself something fun to look forward to on a daily basis.

It could be something big, like a vacation. Or something small, like fancy crackers in your lunch.

Winter slowdown is normal, but if your blahs run really blue, consider seeking treatment for Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

Health-care professionals can advise on ways to make the dreary months less dark, both at work and in your off-hours.

The weather outside may be frightful, but the next few months don't have to be totally awful.

There are ways to curb your curmudgeonliness. ISTOCK

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Bacon the icing on baked apple pancake

Christmas brunch.
Bacon-apple upside-down pancake delivers a crowd-pleasing salty caramelized crunch

Like Thanksgiving, Christmas is one of those holidays that requires aroma.

On Thanksgiving, we need the house to smell of turkey and stuffing and sweet potatoes. On Christmas, we need whiffs of indulgent breakfast items, like cinnamon rolls or a bubbling fruit crisp. Or maybe you prefer hash browns and bacon. Those get the job done nicely, too.

This year combine sweet and savoury with this baked pancake inspired by an upside-down cake. For ease, it can partially prepped the night before. To do that, just make the batter as directed in a blender, then refrigerate it overnight in the blender carafe. In the morning, just give it a quick whir to freshen it, then you're ready to assemble the pancake.

This recipe serves 4. MATTHEW MEAD/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

And that's when things get good. You start by frying bacon in a skillet. Once the bacon is crisp, you top it with a layer of thinly sliced apples. Give those a couple minutes to soften, then you add a hefty sprinkle of brown sugar and cinnamon. Finally, you pour on the batter and pop the whole thing in the oven to finish.

When it's done, you overturn the pancake onto a serving platter and cut it into wedges. You may not need to, but there's no harm in dousing the whole thing with maple syrup.

Ingredients

- 3/4 cup whole milk
- 1 egg
- 1 tablespoon canola or vegetable oil
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- Kosher salt
- 1 large apple
- 8 strips bacon
- 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon

1. Heat the oven to 375 F.

2. In a blender, combine the milk, egg, oil and vanilla. Blender until smooth.

3. With the blender running on low, sprinkle in the flour, sugar, baking powder and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Stop blending as soon as the mixture is smooth. Set aside.

4. Use an apple corer or melon baller to core the apple, but leave the fruit intact. Set the apple on its side, then cut it into thin round slices. Set aside.

5. Heat a large oven-safe skillet over medium. Add the bacon and cook for 6 to 7 minutes on one side. Spoon out and discard about half of the fat in the pan, then turn the bacon strips to cook on the other side, laying them flat and evenly over the bottom of the pan.

6. Top the bacon with the apple slices, arranging them evenly. Cover the pan and cook for 2 minutes.

7. Mix together the brown sugar, cinnamon and a pinch of salt, then sprinkle the mixture over the apples.

8. Carefully and evenly pour the pancake batter over the apples and bacon. Place the skillet in the oven and bake until lightly browned and cooked through, about 20 minutes.

9. Let the pancake cool for 5 minutes. Use a paring knife to loosen the edges of the pancake, then overturn a large serving plate over the skillet. Invert the skillet to release the pancake onto the plate. Cut into wedges.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MLS

Whitecaps set to announce Rivero signing

Just in time for the Christmas season, the Vancouver Whitecaps are set to announce that a new striker has joined their ranks.

The Whitecaps are expected to announce in the coming days the acquisition of 22-year-old striker Octavio Rivero to a young designated player contract from O'Higgins FC in Chile's Primera Division.

He's a new gift for Vancouver, which has been in search of a natural scorer.

The Whitecaps have had success recently finding talent from South America, and have travelled to that soccer haven again in hopes of landing another player capable of making a major impact on their roster.

In the 2014 Torneo Apertura, Rivero scored 10 goals in 16 matches with O'Higgins FC.

Rivero also has experience playing for clubs in Uruguay, and the Uruguayan under-17 squad.

He also gives the Whitecaps some size up front. The Vancouver side has plenty of speed and finish has at times been a hot-and-cold issue. However, Rivero stands six-foot-two and weighs 180 pounds, which could make him a go-to target in the box on set plays.

CAM TUCKER/METRO

Follow Cam Tucker on Twitter @camtucker_metro

'A power forward in the truest sense'

Jake Virtanen.
Canucks' fifth overall pick has to bring physical presence for Team Canada

CAM TUCKER
cam.tucker@metronews.ca

Canada's Jake Virtanen, who is also a Canucks prospect, bowls over Russia's Damir Sharipzyanov during an exhibition game in Toronto on Friday. STEVE RUSSELL/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

It's a stage like no other for a teenaged Canadian hockey player.

For the Vancouver Canucks, there is added interest in the world junior championship. Jake Virtanen, the club's first-round pick and the fifth overall selection in the 2014 NHL draft, will play for Team Canada, which hasn't won gold in the event since 2009 and will look to end the drought on home ice in Toronto and Montreal.

It's a situation that will involve tremendous pressure. Though it can be interesting to see how teenagers react with their performance on the ice.

Vancouver can be like a fish bowl at times in terms of fan and media attention, and scrutiny that comes with it.

The demand to perform well and win is constant. Now the Canucks get to see how Virtanen does in a hyped-up environment, with a great number of eyes watching live and on television.

"I think it's a great experience for him," said Canucks general manager Jim Benning in a phone interview with Metro this week.

"They have to play with focus and intensity ... and he's under the microscope."

Virtanen missed 11 games at the start of the 2014-15 WHL season as he continued his recovery from off-season shoulder surgery, which also limited his time on the ice during Vancouver's training camp in September.

But he got back into the Hitmen lineup, and appeared for the WHL team in the Super Series against Russia.

He was a physical menace, using his speed and throwing his body around. He showed a scoring touch in the first game, too, and both of those elements could be of great use to Team Canada.

"That's a part of who he is," said Benning.

"You know how we give players terms? Well, he's a power forward in the truest sense. He's physically strong, he's physical but he's got the ability to play in both styles of the game. If it's a fast, skilled game, he can play that style of game.

"Or if it's a physical game where you don't have a lot of room out there ... he can play that style, too."

Hill providing a spark on Seahawks' D-line

Jordan Hill didn't intend on starting his professional career with the Seattle Seahawks by essentially redshirting as if he was still in college.

That's essentially what happened to Hill during Seattle's Super Bowl run a season ago. Slowed by injuries and never finding his way into Seattle's defensive line rotation, Hill spent the majority of his rookie season as a spectator on the Seahawks sideline.

That time spent watching and learning is finally paying off for Hill and the Seahawks.

The Seahawks' Jordan Hill tackles Cardinals quarterback Drew Stanton on Nov. 23 in Seattle. STEVE DYKES/GETTY IMAGES

"He's more confident, sure. He's healthy, too, now. He was banged up for a little while in there," Seattle coach Pete Carroll said. "We're very fortunate that we're coming together."

Getting to the quarterback

5

Hill has five sacks in Seattle's last five games.

Hill has quickly developed into an important part of Seattle's pass rush that has improved dramatically the second half of the season. After having just 13 sacks in the first 10 games, the Seahawks have 20 sacks in the past five games.

And Hill has been right in the middle of the improved quarterback chasing. Hill has been responsible for five of those 20 sacks.

"I didn't plan on being injured and stuff like that, but the more and more game experience I get the better I have a chance to be," Hill said. "I just want to take advantage of all the opportunities I'm getting. Even though I'm playing a little bit better, I still feel I left a lot out on the field that I could have capitalized on." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Girgensons gets lots of love from Latvia

NHL. Second-year Sabre still atop all-star voting thanks to fervent fans in homeland

Zemgus Girgensons feels a little sheepish discussing how fans back home in Latvia have clicked and quadruple-clicked his name so often that he is running away with the NHL all-star Game vote.

The Sabres forward appreciates the overwhelming support he's received from the Baltic nation. And yet the 20-year-old Girgensons doesn't consider himself worthy of being included among the league's elite.

"It came out of nowhere. I know people know me back home, but I didn't think it was going to go that far. That's like crazy far," he said.

Quoted

"It's a little bit embarrassing and funny at the same time."

Zemgus Girgensons on getting a million votes from his home country, Latvia, which has a population of two million

As of Tuesday, Girgensons has a league-leading 1,291,186 votes, with about 80 per cent coming from Latvia.

The only limit on voting is fans can use the same device no more than 10 times a day.

Chicago's Patrick Kane (815,990 votes) is second among forwards, followed by teammate Jonathan Toews (803,034). THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Sabres' Zemgus Girgensons. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Hockey juniors

Team Canada demolishes Swiss

Max Domi scored a hat trick to lead Canada to a 6-0 victory over Switzerland on Tuesday in the final pre-tournament game before the start of the junior world championship.

Brayden Point, Jake Virtanen and Nick Ritchie also scored for Canada, which went 2-0-1 in its three exhibition matches.

Goalie Zach Fucale made 14 saves for the shutout. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Heading to $4M US

Big leaguers' wages skyrocket

Major League Baseball's average salary shot up to more than $3.8 million this year following the steepest rise since 2001, putting big leaguers on track to top the $4 million barrier for the first time in 2015.

The Major League Baseball Players Association said Tuesday the average salary was $3,818,923, up from $3,386,212 last year.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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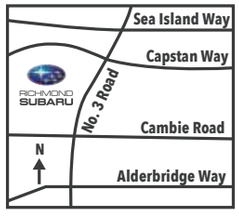

*Pricing applies to a 2015 Outback 2.5i (FD1 BP) with MSRP of $30,070 including freight & PDI ($1,650), documentation fees ($395)and battery tax ($30). License, taxes, insurance and registration extra. Dealers may sell for less. Dealer order/trade may be necessary. Model shown is a 2015 Outback 2.5i Limited Package (FD2 LP) with MSRP of $37,970. including freight & PDI ($1,650), documentation fees ($595), and battery tax ($30). License, taxes, insurance and registration extra. Vehicle shown solely for purpose of illustration, and may not be equipped exactly as shown. **1.9% lease/finance rates available on all new 2015 Outback models for a 24-month term. Financing and leasing programs available through Toyota Credit Canada Inc. on approved credit. †$500 Holiday Bonus Accessories offer applies to lease, finance and cash agreements for select new 2014 and 2015 Subaru models and can be combined with Stackable Cash and Alternate Cash offers. **/†Offers valid until January 2nd, 2015. Contact Richmond Subaru for more details Ratings are awarded for five crashworthiness tests by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) (www.iihs.org) – moderate frontal, side impact, rear impact, roof strength, and the new small overlap frontal crash test. To earn a 2014 TOP SAFETY PICK+, vehicles must earn good ratings in the moderate overlap front, side, roof strength and head restraint tests; a good or acceptable rating in the small overlap front test; anda basic, advanced or superior rating for front crash prevention. DL #31150.

Wiggins is no LeBron – yet

Cleveland Cavaliers' LeBron James, right, drives on Minnesota Timberwolves' Andrew Wiggins, of Canada, on Tuesday in Cleveland. The Cavs won 125-104, but Wiggins scored 27 against the team that drafted him before trading him to the Timberwolves.

MARK DUNCAN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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DRIVE 5

2015 Mazda MX-5

- **Type.** Two-door, rear-wheel-drive compact sports car
- **Engine.** 2.0-litre inline four cylinder (167 hp)
- **Transmissions.** Six-speed manual or automatic
- **Price.** $29,450 base (GX), $42,720 as-tested (anniversary edition)

Market position

Debuted in 1989 and continues to stick to original script of providing the most fun-to-drive roadster for the money. The Miata/MX-5 is the best-selling two-seat sports car in history and now has no direct competitors. It is a spiritual successor to traditional low-cost British roadsters, such as the MGB and TR6.

Points

- 2015 Anniversary Edition the last iteration of current generation. An all-new MX-5 is due out next year.
- The U.S. and Canada each received only 100 copies of the Anniversary Edition, which sold out quickly.
- The only exterior colour combination is Soul Red Mica/Brilliant Black — the latter for the retractable hardtop.

The power hardtop roof is slick, but the manual top is easy to use.

Safety features

Stability and traction control, four-wheel disc brakes with anti-lock and electronic brake force distribution, limited slip differential, anti-theft alarm, engine immobilizer theft deterrent, front and side airbags, seat-belt pretensioners with force limiter, side impact door beams, fog lights, Xenon headlights.

Just don't mess with success

PHOTOS: MIKE GOETZ

Review. With a new MX-5 on the horizon, let's hope Mazda sticks with its Miata formula for fun and affordability

MIKE GOETZ
drive@metronews.ca

Nobody rocks the concept of a fun and affordable two-seat roadster quite like Mazda. Then again, nobody else really tries anymore.

And who could blame them? Why invest in a separate platform, which is hard to share with other vehicles, for a shrinking pool of buyers?

These cars don't exude the prestige they used to in North America and Europe, as crossovers continue their unrelenting path to complete vehicle domination. And there isn't much demand for them in China and other emerging markets, perhaps defeated by concerns about the weather, traffic and pollution, and a preference among the rich to be chauffeured rather than drive themselves around.

All of which makes the MX-5 even more precious to those of us who still enjoy driving.

From its inception in 1990, the Miata was conceived as a car to provide the most driving joy per dollar, by keeping engine size and power in check, and concentrating on lightness, balance, driver feedback and simplicity.

And although the car was renamed the MX-5 in 2006, Mazda hasn't strayed from the script since, including the all-new 2016 MX-5, which is waiting in the wings.

Compared to most everything else on the road, the Miata/MX-5 is a small and precise gem. And the 2015 25th-anniversary edition is even more gem-like, with some elegant cosmetic touches, and a knockout Soul Red Micra paint job.

The cabin is tight but cosy, with miniature controls and little storage space.

With just 100 anniversary editions available in Canada, they sold out months ago, but you can still buy the equally impressive 2014 GT model.

The MX-5 offers very light and agile handling. The 2.0-litre four-cylinder engine likes to rev, but takes premium fuel. Its 167 horsepower are not overwhelming, but everything feels faster when you're this low and connected to the pavement. And the manual gearbox is one of the most satisfying to use in autodom.

The ride is not as stiff as you might expect, because it doesn't need a stiff suspension for handling, but it is a bit noisy on the highway.

The cabin is tight, but cosy, with miniature controls and little storage space. Your legs go straight out, with no bend to the knee.

The optional power hardtop roof is slick, but the manual top is super light and easy to use. The trunk is small but surprisingly useful.

Net result: The MX-5 is one very fine, two-seat, convertible sports car.

Compare

1 BMW Z4
Base price: $56,395
Good looking and powerful, but not visceral.

2 Porsche Boxster
Base price: $59,685
Good looking and powerful, and very visceral.

3 Nissan 370Z Roadster
Base price: $51,238
Excellent bits don't seem to add up to an engaging experience.

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NEW 2015 CR-V LX

Lease for
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$0 down ‡

Weekly on a 60 month term with 260 payments.
MSRP $27,685** includes freight and PDI
Model shown: RM3H3FES

Standard features include:
- Earth Dreams™ technology powertrain
- Multi-angle rearview camera
- Heated front seats

PLUS **$500** HOLIDAY BONUS ‡‡

2015 CIVIC DX

Lease for
$45 † 2.99% APR €
$0 down ‡

Weekly on a 60 month term with 260 payments.
MSRP $17,245** includes freight and PDI
Model shown: FB2E2FEX

Features available on select models:
- Honda Lanewatch Blind Spot Display™
- Multi-angle rearview camera
- 7" Display Audio System with HondaLink™

PLUS **$500** HOLIDAY BONUS ‡‡

NEW 2015 FIT DX

Lease for
$40 * 2.99% APR #
$0 down ‡

Weekly on a 60 month term with 260 payments.
MSRP $15,990** includes freight and PDI
Model shown: GK5G3FE

Standard features include:
- Earth Dreams™ technology powertrain
- Multi-angle rearview camera
- 60/40 Split 2nd Row Magic Seat®

HONDA

bchonda.com

‡In order to achieve $0 down payment, dealer will cover the cost of tire/battery tax, air conditioning tax (where applicable), environmental fees and levies on the 2015 CR-V LX 2WD, Civic DX and Fit DX only on behalf of the customer. ΩLimited time weekly lease offer based on a new 2015 CR-V LX 2WD model RM3H3FES. ¥1.99% lease APR on a 60 month term with 260 weekly payments O.A.C. Weekly payment, including freight and PDI, is $69.89 based on applying $400.00 lease dollars (which is deducted from the negotiated selling price before taxes). Down payment of $0.00, first weekly payment and $0 security deposit due at lease inception. Total lease obligation is $18,171.40. Taxes, license, insurance and registration are extra. 120,000 kilometre allowance; charge of $0.12/km for excess kilometres. †Limited time weekly lease offer based on a new 2015 Civic DX model FB2E2FEX. €2.99% lease APR on a 60 month term with 260 weekly payments O.A.C. Weekly payment, including freight and PDI, is $44.90 based on applying $600.00 lease dollars (which is deducted from the negotiated selling price before taxes). Down payment of $0.00, first weekly payment and $0 security deposit due at lease inception. Total lease obligation is $11,674.00. Taxes, license, insurance and registration are extra. 120,000 kilometre allowance; charge of $0.12/km for excess kilometres. *Limited time weekly lease offer based on a new 2015 Fit DX model GK5G3FE. #2.99% lease APR on a 60 month term with 260 weekly payments O.A.C. Weekly payment, including freight and PDI, is $39.97 based on applying $875.00 lease dollars (which is deducted from the negotiated selling price before taxes). Down payment of $0.00, first weekly payment and $0 security deposit due at lease inception. Total lease obligation is $10,392.20. Taxes, license, insurance and registration are extra. 120,000 kilometre allowance; charge of $0.12/km for excess kilometres. ‡‡$500 Consumer Incentive Dollars "Holiday Bonus" ("Holiday Bonus") available on any new 2015 Civic and new 2015 CR-V models, purchased or leased and delivered by January 2, 2015 and can be combined with advertised lease and finance rates. "Holiday Bonus" includes GST and PST, as applicable. Visit a participating Honda dealer for eligible products & services applicable to "Holiday Bonus" redemption. Offer ends January 2, 2015 and is subject to change or cancellation without notice. £For more information about the 2015 Motor Trend Sport/Utility of the Year® award, visit http://www.motortrend.com/oftheyear/suv/2015_honda_cr_v_is_the_motor_trend_suv_of_the_year/ **MSRP is $27,685 / $17,245 / $15,990 including freight and PDI of $1,695 / $1,495 / $1,495 based on a new 2015 CR-V LX 2WD model RM3H3FES / Civic DX model FB2E2FEX / Fit DX model GK5G3FE. License, insurance, registration and taxes are extra and may be required at the time of purchase. ‡/Ω/¥/†/€/*/#/**/‡‡ Prices and/or payments shown do not include a PPSA lien registration fee of $30.31 and lien registering agent's fee of $5.25, which are both due at time of delivery and covered by the dealer on behalf of the customer on the 2015 CR-V LX 2WD, Civic DX and Fit DX only. Offers valid from December 2nd, 2014 through January 2nd, 2015 at participating Honda retailers. Dealer may sell/lease for less. Dealer trade may be necessary on certain vehicles. Offers valid only for British Columbia residents at BC Honda Dealers locations. Offers subject to change or cancellation without notice. Terms and conditions apply. Visit www.bchonda.com or see your Honda retailer for full details.

There's nothing cuckoo about coconut coir

Driving Force. Fibres found between the shell and the nut is used for many things, including soaking up oil spills

JIL MCINTOSH
drive@metronews.ca

By their very nature, cars and trucks present numerous environmental issues, and not just because of what comes out of their tailpipes.

When something goes wrong and fluids leak out of a vehicle, mechanics and emergency responders usually sop up the mess with several different types of absorbent products that can have environmental issues of their own.

"The most common products are made from clay or diatomaceous earth," says Toby Wilson, president of Coco Products, which makes a more environment-friendly product called Coco Absorb from coconut fibre.

Coco Absorb is an environmentally friendly way to clean up fluid spills from vehicles. JIL MCINTOSH

"Clay products are mined out of the ground, and they're not renewable. Plus, clay can catch fire when it comes into contact with vegetable oil and will spontaneously combust. We're seeing a lot more of that with biodiesel.

"And if perlite (a type of soft volcanic glass) comes in contact with hydrochloric acid, it will create deadly fumes," he adds. "Our product is not reactive to anything out there."

Coco Absorb is made from coconut pith, also known as coir, which is found between the coconut's hard green outer shell and the familiar dark-brown nut inside. Although it was originally just thrown away, coconut coir is now used in many different ways, including in gardening as a soil amendment or pressed into seedling pots, woven into rope, as insulation and, in some countries, burned as fuel.

It's also used in upholstery. Some auto manufacturers use coir in their seats, and they're experimenting with it as a possible ingredient in lightweight plastics and other materials.

The coir's honeycomb-like structure consists of narrow, hollow cells, which absorb fluids.

Unlike most absorbents, which mainly draw fluids into their outermost layers, the coconut pith uses capillary action to act like a sponge and draw liquids inside. It also holds them there, even as it dries, so it doesn't leach potentially toxic fluids after disposal.

One of coir's best features is that, due to a naturally occurring chemical compound called phenol, it bonds with oil first, and can absorb several times its weight. Once it's completely saturated with oil, it won't absorb water.

Although research is still ongoing, coconut coir could therefore be used to contain and absorb oil spills with minimal environmental damage, sopping up the oil while leaving the clean water behind. Even when left there, the oil-soaked coir won't release any of it back into the water.

Coconut coir is also much lighter in weight than clay absorbents, which makes it easier to transport, store, and use.

Core facts on coir

- Coconut trees don't require chemical fertilizers to grow. Each tree produces as many as 200 coconuts per year, making its fibre a renewable resource.
- Coconut coir can also be mixed with leftover waste paint so that it hardens into a solid that won't leach paint into the environment.
- Coconut-based absorbent is used at Walt Disney World, where it's most commonly used to soak up vomit.

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Credit valid towards the retail purchase or lease of one eligible 2013, 2014, 2015 model year Chevrolet car, SUV, crossover and pickups models (except Colorado 2SA) delivered in Canada between December 2, 2014 and January 2, 2015. Credit is a manufacturer to consumer incentive (tax inclusive) and credit value depends on model purchased: $1500 credit available on all 2014 Chevrolet Sonic, Cruze, Spark, Spark EV, Malibu, Impala, Volt, Camaro, Trax, Equinox, Traverse and 2015 Malibu. Credit valid towards the retail purchase or lease of one eligible 2013, 2014, 2015 model year Chevrolet car, SUV, crossover and pickups models delivered in Canada between December 2, 2014 and January 2, 2015. Credit is a manufacturer to consumer incentive (tax inclusive) available on the retail purchase or lease of 2014 or 2015 model year Chevrolet Sonic, Cruze, Spark, Spark EV, Malibu, Impala, Volt, Camaro, Trax, Equinox, Traverse and 2015 Malibu. Credit value depends on model purchased: $750 credit available on all 2014 Chevrolet Sonic, Cruze, Spark, Spark EV, Malibu, Impala, Volt, Camaro, Trax, Equinox, Traverse and 2015 Malibu. Dealer may be required to obtain and may charge additional fees. Offer may not be redeemed for cash and may not be combined with certain other consumer incentives. Certain limitations or conditions apply. Void where prohibited by law. See your GMCL dealer for details. GMCL reserves the right to amend or terminate offers for any reason in whole or in part at any time without prior notice. **$500 Boxing Week Bonus is a manufacturer-to-consumer credit (tax inclusive) available on the retail purchase or lease of 2014 or 2015 model year Chevrolet Sonic, Cruze, Spark, Spark EV, Malibu, Impala, Volt, Camaro, Trax, Equinox, Traverse and 2015 Malibu. Offer valid from December 15, 2014 to January 2, 2015 (the "Boxing Week Bonus Offer Period"). Dealer may be required to obtain and may charge additional fees. 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GMCL reserves the right to amend or terminate offers for any reason in whole or in part at any time without prior notice. ††Based on 2014 Chevrolet Equinox 2LT AWD with available 2.4L ECOTEC® I-4 engine. Comparison based on 2014 Fuel Consumption Guide. ▼Based on GM Testing in accordance with approved Transport Canada test methods. Actual fuel consumption will vary based on road conditions, driving habits and vehicle condition. +Based on 2014 Chevrolet Equinox with standard 2.4L ECOTEC® I-4 engine. Comparison based on Natural Resources Canada's 2014 Fuel Consumption Guide. ♥Based on GM Testing in accordance with approved Transport Canada test methods. Actual fuel consumption will vary based on road conditions, driving habits and vehicle condition. ^Whichever comes first. See dealer for details. ^^Whichever comes first. Fluid top-offs, inspections, tire rotations, wheel alignments and balancing, etc., are not covered. Additional conditions and limitations apply. 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NEW 2014 CHEVROLET SONIC

27 AVAILABLE

5 star safety rating, StabiliTrak, Sedan, traction control, OnStar, remote keyless entry, 2 year complimentary oil changes

#4S09647

MSRP **$15,545**
Boxing week discount: **$1,550**
Cash purchase discount: **$1,500**
Disc brand loyalty: **$1,500**
Dueck cash price:
$10,995

NEW 2014 CHEVROLET TRAX

48 AVAILABLE

#4TX5183

Remote keyless entry, 6 airbags, USB port, Manual transmission, oil life monitoring system, traction control, OnStar

MSRP **$20,295**
Boxing week discount: **$805**
Cash purchase discount: **$2,000**
Disc brand loyalty: **$1,500**
Dueck cash price: **$15,990**

NEW 2014 CHEVROLET CRUZE

105 AVAILABLE

#4CR8363

6 speed auto, connectivity package, 10 airbags, XM radio, Bluetooth, OnStar, Tire Pressure monitor, 2 year complimentary oil changes

MSRP **$21,805**
Boxing week discount: **$2,556**
Cash purchase discount: **$1,750**
Disc brand loyalty: **$1,500**
Dueck cash price: **$15,999**

NEW 2015 CHEVROLET MALIBU

30 AVAILABLE

#5MA6144

6 speed auto, Cruise, 10airbags, Tire pressure monitoring, remote keyless entry, Bluetooth, steering wheel mounted audio controls, 2 year complimentary oil changes

MSRP **$26,790**
Boxing week discount: **$6,695**
Disc brand loyalty: **$1,500**
Dueck cash price: **$18,595**

NEW 2014 GMC SIERRA DOUBLE CAB

#4CK6615

4.3L V6, Flex Fuel, A/C, Power Windows, Remote Keyless Entry, Cruise, Tailgate Lock, 2 Year Complimentary Oil Changes

MSRP **$32,845**
Boxing week discount: **$4,850**
Cash purchase discount: **$3,000**
Truck loyalty: **$1,000**
Dueck cash price: **$23,999**

Prices exclude taxes and $549 documentation fee. All loyalties are based on vehicles from 1999 or newer. Customers are eligible for Vegas give-a-way with purchase of new or used vehicle from Dueck GM. One per customer. See Dealer for details. Offer ends Dec. 31, 2014.

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AUGMENTED REALITY

Stuck on 12 Across? Scan this image with your Metro News app for today's crossword and Sudoku answers. It's OK. No one's watching.

→ See the full instructions on Metro's Voices page.

Horoscopes by Sally Brompton

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
Someone will turn to you and you won't let them down. You like few things better than charging to the rescue, especially when backing the underdog against a bully.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
A colleague will make you an offer you find hard to refuse today, but can you trust them? Find out if it is genuine and, if it is, let them know quickly you want in on the game.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
There will be some remarkable developments in the final days of the year but conserve your energy. The less you do now the more you will gain later on.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
Someone will try to pressure you into justifying what you are doing. Do what feels right to you and, if others don't like it, that's just too bad.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
Try to build bridges to people you don't always get along with. Just because you have different outlooks does not mean you cannot be friends.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Don't worry if you have fallen out with a loved one. A few days from now you will be the best of friends again, so don't take it personally if they don't seem to care. They do really.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Make time for family members and make sure they know how much you love them. It won't hurt to be a bit more emotionally expressive.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
According to your solar chart this is a good day for doing nothing much, so sit back, relax and let life come to you.

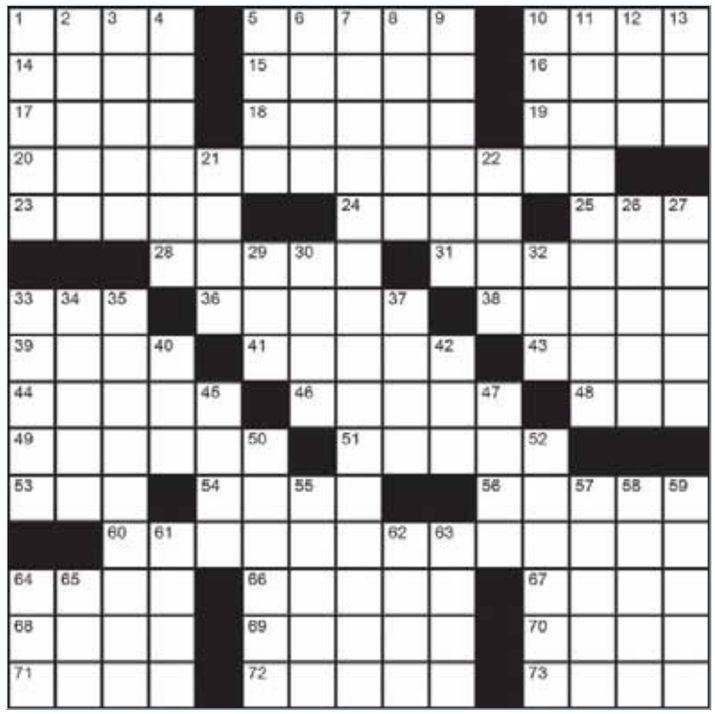
♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Deep down you are a big softie and what happens today will prove it. Someone who needs a helping hand will have much to thank you for. It could be the start of a beautiful friendship.

♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
For best results you should try to be on the move today. If you stay in the same place you could miss out on something special. Get moving and see where fate takes you.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Make the most of Mars in your sign to try something new and maybe take a few risks. You have always been the adventurous sort and now you are determined to show you have absolutely no fear.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Yake life at a sensible pace, especially if you are hosting friends and family over the holiday period. Don't try to do everything yourself.

Crossword: Canada Across and Down by Kelly Ann Buchanan



Across
1. Herd baby
5. Pointer
10. Hurt
14. Spoken
15. "Silver Bells" bit: "Children laughing / People passing / Meeting __ after..."
16. Christmastime 'pet'
17. Ms. Suvari
18. Reindeers' sniffers
19. "God __ Ye Merry, Gentlemen"
20. "On the seventh day of Christmas / My true love gave to me / Seven __ __ __..." - Bob & Doug McKenzie, "12 Days of Christmas"
23. "Silent Night": "__ in heavenly peace."
24. "Let It Snow": "But the __ is so delightful."
25. Mr. Capote, shortly
28. Christmas star
31. Court game
33. Got [abbr.]
36. Rudolph's straps
38. Terre-__ (Newfoundland)
39. "__! The Herald Angels Sing"
41. Principle
43. 'Game' suffix
44. Cookies left for #28-Across, perhaps
46. Tint-to-hair appliers
48. Jr.s' fathers
49. Reindeer crew member
51. Threshold
53. Ands: French
54. Bellow!
56. Fragrance
60. Gift disguiser: 2 wds.
64. "__ in a Manger"
66. Bird of Jove
67. Roman emperor
68. Ms. Gilbert
69. Mythological blood
70. Mr. Kringle
71. Religious song
72. __ __. (Food packaging meas.)
73. Fully satisfy

Down
1. Free passes, briefly
2. "It's been _ __ pleasure."
3. Mr. Bass
4. Snowy droplets
5. __ __ other (Without equals)
6. "__ __ two minds..."
7. "Jingle Bells": "A day or two ago / I thought I'd take a ride / And soon __ __ __ / Was seated by my side."
8. Fragrant resin
9. Skiing locale
10. Churchyard = God's __
11. They're roasting in the famous Christmas carol
12. G'days
13. Dine
21. Box
22. Eager
26. Christmastime tune by Joni Mitchell
27. Device operators
29. Mesh
30. Linked
32. Belonging to Omaha's li'l state
33. Providence, __ Island
34. Jeweller's unit, variantly
35. Wear a toque, scarf, parka and gloves: 2 wds.
37. Visionary
40. __-i-Noor Diamond
42. Prefix with 'cycle'
45. Evening, in Italy
47. Period of cold weather
50. Corral: 2 wds.
52. "Christmas with the __" (2004)
55. Speedily
57. Classical show
58. Virtue
59. Came about
61. Mr. Gosling
62. Sugar substitute, Sweet'_ __
63. Actor Mr. Frobe
64. Fireplace stuff
65. Method

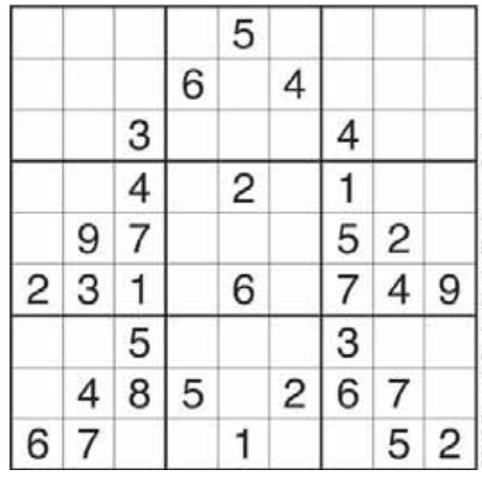
Yesterday's Crossword

Online

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.



Yesterday's Sudoku

1	2	6	4	3	9	5	7	8
7	9	3	2	5	8	6	4	1
4	8	5	1	7	6	2	3	9
3	7	4	6	9	5	1	8	2
9	1	2	3	8	4	7	5	6
6	5	8	7	1	2	4	9	3
2	6	9	8	4	7	3	1	5
5	3	7	9	6	1	8	2	4
8	4	1	5	2	3	9	6	7

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